

Defense Official Minimizes Threat Of ABM Fallout

By George C. Wilson
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The fallout from an anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) defense would not do any serious damage to the population of the United States, the Government's top weapons specialists have told the Senate.

Their statements, contained in Senate Disarmament Subcommittee hearings released yesterday, strengthen the argument of lawmakers and others pressing for a "thin" missile defense around the United States.

Some opponents of any ABM defense have argued that such a system would be self-defeating since the fallout from it would kill the population even if attacking ICBMs were neutralized.

John S. Foster Jr., director of Defense research and engineering told the subcommittee that "I do not believe that in the normal deployment and

tactics of the Nike X that there would be any serious damage to our population..."

Little Contamination

Norris E. Bradbury, director of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, said "the anti-ballistic missile does not involve the question of too greatly contaminating the atmosphere. The radioactivity is distributed worldwide and falls on the ground very slowly, by which time it has greatly decayed. In principle, I don't believe one has any worldwide genetic or physiological problems from the antiballistic defense missile systems which have been described."

The missile defense system the United States is working on is called Nike X. It consists of several types of radars plus two types of missiles — a Sprint to hit incoming ICBMs close to earth and the Spartan to attack them out in space.

Weapons specialists emphasize that these defending missiles would be relatively clean since they would not pick up debris from the earth as they exploded. Radioactive fallout that binds itself to debris is the most dangerous type.

Postponing Any Decision

President Johnson is postponing any decision about building an ABM defense until he learns whether the Soviets can be persuaded to stop deploying their system. Several Senators during the hearings expressed concern about letting the negotiations drag out too long.

Cyrus Vance, Deputy Secretary of Defense, said it would cost \$3.5 billion to build a "thin" defense around the United States. This would protect the United States as a whole from a light missile attack. The Joint Chiefs of Staff want to fill in the gaps between the defending missiles of a thin ABM system. Their proposal would cost about \$10 billion for tight protection of 25 cities and about \$20 billion for 50 cities.

Foster said the \$20 billion ABM defense was not "technically justified" because it would have to be completely updated every two years as technology improved. He said ABM research should con-